

NO ILLUSION
NO. 526

A SERMON DELIVERED
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*“And wist not that it was true which was done by the angel;
 but thought he saw a vision.”*
Acts 12:9.

FANCY, not fact! A dream! A delusion! That would be the world's estimate of the most blessed Christian experience. “Fanaticism” is the name by which they call it. But call it by whatever name you please, the grace that interposes and rescues a sinner from the law's threatenings, from Satan's tyranny, from the malice of men, and the fears of one's own heart, is matter of abundant joy. Then let it be witnessed by a life of undeviating principle and devoted service of God—sneer who may—suspect it who will—it is a noble triumph.

Such triumphs of grace we have among us, and there are many who can witness to the fact. Still, dear friends, not infrequently does it happen that you, whose salvation is our joy, of whom we speak with the utmost assurance, are yourselves in straits, exercised with fightings without and fears within, and you are unable to satisfy your own consciences that the work is divine. Observe now that Peter was brought out of prison by a great miracle, and yet it seemed to him as a vision or a dream. I need not recapitulate the circumstances. I have just read them in your hearing. This much I propose.

First, let me endeavor to *draw out some reflections from the narrative*. And then, secondly, I shall *take up the text itself and try to show you that there is no illusion, whatever you may think, in the mighty operations of the Lord*.

To begin—the first remark we think we are justified in making is this, that if ever our enemies can get hold of us, they will be quite sure to hold us as fast as they can. When Herod had been able to apprehend Peter, he was not content with ordinary means of keeping him in custody. He has Peter put into the strongest prison in Jerusalem. To make assurance doubly sure, he is chained not to one soldier, but to two.

He was too great a prize to be readily lost. He anticipated as much satisfaction for himself from the applause of the people, for putting so eminent a servant of Christ as James to death, that he could not afford to lose an opportunity of getting further prey. So he seized him who was accounted a pillar in the church with singular quickness.

Mark you, men and brethren, if by any fault of our own we ever fall into the hand of our enemies, we need expect no mercy from them. And if without fault we be delivered for a little season into their hands, we have good reason to cry aloud to God, for whoever may be spared, the Christian never is. Men will forgive a thousand faults in others, but they will magnify the most trivial offense in the true follower of Jesus. Nor do I very much regret this. Let it be so, and let it be a caution to us to walk very carefully before God in the land of the living.

You young members of the church, who are often engaged in your worldly calling, where a great number of persons are watching for your falling, let this be a special reason to walk very humbly before God. If you walk carelessly, remember the lynx-eyed world will soon see it, and then, with its hundred tongues, it will soon spread the story. You may say, “Tell it not in Gath. Publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of Philistia rejoice.”

But they will tell it. With many an addition of their own, they will repeat the story. You shall hear them say, “Aha! Aha! So would we have it. All these Christians are inconsistent, they are all mere

professors, they are hypocrites to a man, every one of them." Thus will much damage be done to our good cause and much insult offered to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The cross of Christ is in itself an offense to the world. Let us take heed that we do not add any offense of our own. It is "to the Jew a stumbling block." Let us mind that we put no stumbling blocks where there are enough already. "To the Greek it is foolishness." Let us not add our folly to give point to the scorn with which the worldly-wise deride the Gospel.

Oh, how jealous should we be of ourselves, for we serve a jealous God! How rigid should we be with our consciences, for we serve one whose name is "Holy, Holy, Holy!" Yes, in the presence of adversaries, who will misrepresent our best deeds and torture our best endeavors into something selfish—impugning our motives where they cannot censure our actions—how circumspect should we be!

We pilgrims travel as suspected persons through the world. Not only are we under surveillance, but there are more spies than we reck of. The espionage is everywhere, at home and abroad. If we fall into their hands, we may sooner expect generosity from a wolf, or mercy from a fiend, than to find anything like patience with our infirmities from the men of the world, or anything like the hiding of our iniquities from the men who spice their infidelity towards God with scandals against His people.

The world is too much like the accursed Canaan who pointed to his father's nakedness. We can only expect of our own brethren, the conduct of Shem and Japheth, who shall go backward to cast the mantle over us. Better far that we should so act and so live as to not ever need this mantle of charity, but be able to say, with all humility, yet with holy courage, "Lord, You know that in this thing I have not sinned, but have walked uprightly in Your ways." That is the first lesson which I feel bound to inculcate, "For what glory is it, if when you be buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently?"

The second lesson is this. When a case is put into God's hands, He will certainly manage it well, and He will interfere in sufficient time to bring His servants out of their distress. Peter's case was put into God's hands. The company that met at the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, were appealing to the Great Advocate. If any man is in prison, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

With their humble prayers and tears they were pleading for their brother, whose valuable life they could ill afford to spare, for the infant church needed the apostles at least for a season. I think I hear them pleading one after the other, "Lord, remember Peter! You know how we love him. Our desires go up for him. James is dead. Alas! we took up his body and mourned him. Let not Peter be slain! Oh, take not the prop from under us! Remove not the pillar from the wall, nor the stone from its place."

The Lord has heard their cries. Peter's cause is in His hand. He will interfere in due time. The assurance that prayer is heard is the earnest that prayer will be answered. The petition is accepted, though no answer has yet been received. Well, we can leave it there.

But look, brethren, Peter has been lying in prison the whole week. The feast of unleavened bread is over, it is the last night, *the last night!* The evening has crept on. Nay, the dark hours have set in. It is midnight. The sun will soon be rising—in a few more hours—and then where is Peter? Lord, if You do not interfere, where is Peter? If You come not now to help him, his blood shall make the populace of Jerusalem glad while they gloat and delight in his slaughter!

Yes, but just at that last and darkest hour of the night, God's opportunity overtook man's extremity. A light shone in the dungeon. Peter was awakened. God never is before His time, nor is He ever too late. He comes just when He is needed. But look, there is Peter asleep! Peter is asleep, doing nothing, *doing nothing!* Well, and the best thing for him too, for the case was put into God's hand.

I ask you, dear friends, suppose Peter had been awake, what could he do? Had he been fretting and troubling himself, what good could he have done? Finding, therefore, that nothing remained for him, he just throws himself upon the mercy of God, shuts his eyes as peaceably as though he were to wake tomorrow to a wedding feast, and not to his own execution.

Sleep on, blessed slumberer! Well might Herod envy you that peace which his kingly robe could never give him. You sleep, though your hands be chained, for your spirit is free. And it may be that in your dreams you are rejoicing “with a joy unspeakable, and full of glory.” When the case is taken into God’s hands, and you and I feel that we can do nothing for ourselves, we may take sleep in perfect quietude, for so He gives His beloved sleep. While we sleep, His watchful eyes do keep their ceaseless guard. Jesus might seem on one occasion to be asleep, but you know where He slept—it was in the hinder part of the ship. Why there? I think He slept with His hand on the tiller, so that the moment He awoke, He might steer the vessel—

*“Though winds and waves assault thy keel,
He does preserve it, He does steer—
E’en when the bark seems most to reel.*

*“Storms are the triumphs of His art,
Sure He may close His eyes, but not His heart.”*

God sleeps never. He is ever on the watch for His people. “Well, but” says one, “surely the Lord should have interfered before this time, for Peter is not only asleep, but he is bound—bound to two soldiers! How can he escape?” Ah! that word “How?”—*that word “How?”* What a deal of mischief it has done to faith! But do you know that true faith has no such word in all her vocabulary? Faith never asks, “How?” God has said, “It shall be,” faith believes it *will* be. As to *how* it shall be, that is God’s business, not mine.

It is Unbelief that says, “How? I do not see it. How? How? How can it be?” Hush, Unbelief! The fetters shall drop off, gates shall open of their own accord. The case is in God’s hand, man. If it were in man’s hand, it would fail, for cursed is he who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm. The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh must crack. There must be impossibilities to humanity, but to the Deity impossibilities are nothing. Be you quiet, for the case is with Him. It may be the last moment, the apostle may be asleep, and he may be bound, but Peter must come out, for God has heard the prayer, and Peter shall be free.

Yet a third remark, we think, lies like a precious stone upon the very surface of this narrative. It is this—that when God shall come to deliver His people, all the circumstances which seem to go against their deliverance shall only tend to set forth the more His glory. What contempt *He* puts upon chains, prisons, cords, iron gates, wards—inner and outer wards—see how He breaks their bonds asunder, and casts their cords from him.

I know of nothing that seems to illustrate more God’s splendid triumph over man’s cunning than the resurrection of Christ. “His disciples will steal Him away while men sleep.” “Well,” says Pilate, “you have a watch, go and make it as sure as you can.” He trusted to men, who were sure to do the thing well—the men that hated Him. They keep the watch, they roll the great stone, they seal it, they go home to their beds. Ah, men of the Sanhedrin, proud priests! You have done the work, go to your rest, and say, “This deceiver shall never shake the earth again, nor call us dumb dogs that cannot bark, nor tell us that we are blind leaders of the blind. He is buried and the seal is on Him.”—

*“Vain the watch, the stone, the seal,
Christ has broke the gates of hell.”*

See Him rise! And as the angel sits down upon the stone, he seems, in quiet sarcasm, to say to the priests, to earth, to hell, “Roll it back again if you can, and seal it once more, for He is risen, and has overcome the wiles of men.”

So, Christian, rest assured that everything that looks black to your gaze now, shall only make it the brighter when God delivers you. Every dark and bending line shall surely meet in the center of His love, and but the more express to your mind His power, His wisdom, His faithfulness, His truth.

Furthermore, the whole story seems to teach us that no difficulty can ever occur which God cannot meet when He makes bare His arm. The chains are gone, the cells are passed, but there is that iron gate. Oh, that iron gate! I think there are some of you tonight who are troubled about it. God has been helping you. You have had faith up till now, but you have got to the iron gate. Oh! if you could but pass that—it leads into the city—all would be well. But that iron gate!

Some of you get to dreading the iron gate a month before you get to it. You get to fretting and troubling yourself for three months perhaps about the iron gate. You do for months, as those holy women did for hours, who went out at the break of day to the sepulcher, and as they went along they said, "Who shall roll away the stone?" There was no stone to roll away!

And when *you* go to this place, you will find that there is no iron gate there, or if there should be, it will open of its own accord. Oh, how often have we had to wonder at our own folly, and we have said, "Well, I will never do that again. I will never more borrow misery. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. I will never go out to get a loan of sorrow for tomorrow." But alas, we have done it the very next day. Wait, wait, O Christian, on the Lord and leave all anxiety about the iron gates. Since the day when you did believe in Him and put your soul into His hand by prayer, it has been God's cause, not your cause. It has been God's work to deliver you, and not your work.

***The gates of brass before Him burst,
The iron fetters yield.***

There is yet this one further remark. See, beloved, see clearly, see indisputably—the omnipotence of prayer. If all those disciples had sworn an oath that they would get Peter free, they could not have accomplished it. What could they do? Herod has an army. The prison is strong. The guards are not to be bribed. The last night is come. What can they do? There was only one weapon they could use, and that was hanging at their belts—the weapon of *all-prayer*. They told Jesus of it. When every other gate was shut, there was the gate to heaven open—so they sent messages up to Him who is able to loose the prisoners, and to their own surprise Peter is loosed.

Have not we, in this church, often felt the power of prayer? I sometimes fear me, beloved, we are flagging here now—flagging in prayer. I may be permitted to say, there are some of you I do not see as often at prayer meetings as I could wish. It is a busy time of the year, I know, and therefore I make plenty of excuses for you, but when it was not so busy I did not see you! And then there are some who grow dull in their recollections of fact. At Park Street have not we had seasons when our hearts were hot within us, when we could not speak because we thought, "Surely God is in this place!" It seemed an awful place to us. We were prevailing with God, we were drawing down the blessing, and that blessing has continued up till now as the result of earnest supplication.

What simple prayers they were! Strangers that came in found much fault, but the Lord did not. There were often things said that were not very grammatical, but what mattered it if the heart was in the thing? We stormed heaven's gates and down came legions of mercies to us.

We want more prayer, more prayer. I am always glad to hear that your special prayer meetings, and your social assemblies for supplication are well attended, and that there is a desire among the members to have such prayer meetings often. I am sure the elders of the church will join with me in advocating and encouraging them. We will lend the rooms connected with this Tabernacle, convinced that the oftener we meet together, and the oftener we supplicate the throne of grace, the blessing will come down.

There are a few brethren who have met every morning for these last four years, or five years it may be. They meet now every morning, wet or dry, winter or summer, every morning in the chapel at Park

Street, always praying for our prosperity. Their numbers are few to what they used to be. We have not got the fire now that we once had, I fear. May the Lord put the embers together and fan them with His breath, and make them blaze again, until our ministry shall be with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and the multitudes shall hear the voice of God speaking in their hearts.

Brethren, pray for us, pray for your children, your households. Take everything to God in prayer, no matter how hard, how intricate, how difficult. If there is a knot you cannot untie, cut it with prayer. God knows how to deliver you when you cannot deliver yourself. Be much in supplication, for this will make you mighty, make you prevalent with men when you have prevailed with the Maker of men. Such are the reflections that occur to us from the narrative.

II. But now I turn more closely to my text itself. When Peter came out of prison, his deliverance was so marvelous that he did not know whether it was true or whether it was a vision. Like the Psalm which says, "When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream." Thus, when a sinner is saved, pardoned, justified, he is utterly astonished and thinks it cannot be true, because it is so good. The astonishment lies in this, "It cannot be true," says he, "that I am saved. I! I! I! If it had been all the people in the world, I could have believed it, but can it be that *I* am delivered? How is it that He should have mercy upon *me*? I, that was so lately in fetters? That a week ago could blaspheme? That a day or two ago could have talked all the idlest jests and could have lived upon the foulest of earth's pleasures? That *I*, *I* should be saved—delivered from sin, though so filthy—set free, though so fast bound!"

I must try to interpret this peculiar reflection—this dream-like feeling. The reality of God's mercy is only apprehended by faith. And because faith has to do with things not seen, you are apt to throw suspicions on its evidence. You see no tangible instrumentality equal to the mighty task. Our ruin was, in some sense, effected by degrees. We can trace the course of evil. The soul of man is like a temple in ruins. The temple built for God has become an abode for unclean spirits. God *suddenly* deserted it, but it *gradually* fell into its present dilapidation and uncleanness.

The *eyes* that were once as lamps, which flashed with light and love, have become contracted, and their habit now is to love darkness rather than light. The *tongue* that was once a fountain that sent forth sweet water, pure and refreshing, has become as a noxious spring, whose bitter streams savor of enmity to God, and envy of the brethren. The *heart* that was once as the holy place of all our frame, where the beauty of holiness reposed in heavenly calm, has now become the place of idols and the abode of secret abominations. The very *breath* that sent up its sacred incense in rich perfume, acceptable to God, has grown corrupt, and breathes out its baneful poison, and its foul impurities.

Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth? Will He take up His abode with us? Shall the change be wrought in the twinkling of an eye? Does it suffice that the Word sown in weakness, springs up with the power of the Holy Ghost? Man fallen may baffle us, but man redeemed is a mystery we cannot fathom. It seems always to mere mortal sense as a vision, the dream of poets, or the work of imagination.

But beloved, why marvel? The angel of the covenant has descended from heaven to earth, and you knew not it was He, till He loosed your bonds, broke up your path, or rather opened every door with the keys that hang at His girdle, and gave you knowledge of salvation, by the remission of your sins. Then you thought it was a vision, because you had not known redemption only that your own soul was redeemed. You had not understood salvation only that you were yourself redeemed, and that matchless secret of the new birth penetrated your understanding in the same hour that it was wrought upon your own heart.

Thus it is commonly with us, brethren. We see, as a main fact, the downward course by which we corrupted our ways when we were dead in sin. But the hour we first believed, that blessed season when we were translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, seems like a vision to us.

Another reason why it appears so visionary to us, is because no forethought or intention of our own helped and availed. Now, this is true with some of you in one way. Never were your purposes less inclined to seek the Lord than they were when He found you. Your plans were broken off before you were aware of it. You were asleep when the angel entered your cell, and you were dreaming of other things than those that were in store for you.

Perhaps you dreamed that the bolts were not heavy, the bars were not thick, and the locks were not fast, and you might get up and let yourself out whenever you liked. It was only when you were delivered that you saw how fast you had been held. The rescued soul alone can know how "Satan binds our captive minds fast in his slavish chains." And in yet another way some of us have proved the same.

We had our schemes to get loose, and many a bitter day we had tried and toiled in vain, till at length we had fallen asleep in blank despair, dreaming of nothing but our fearful doom, when the deliverance came in such an unheard of manner, that we could scarcely persuade ourselves it could be true. And so it is, brethren, we never believe anything to be as real as what we see with our own eyes, and work with our own hands. And I suppose it is just the natural idea which flesh and blood is prone to take of the things of God. They seem more like a vision than the work of a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

And still, I scarcely think I have probed the matter to the bottom yet. The simplicity of God's method of grace has not ceased to be a marvel. The Jews seek after a sign, and there is something of the Jewish nature about us all. At least I find a host of exercised souls who are asking for signs. Well, and the Greeks, who are rather a refined class of unbelievers—they seek after wisdom. They want some extraordinary endowment. And this craving has not died out among us.

For the first, I hear one say, "I am afraid, sir, that my experience is only a dream. I need a sign to give me assurance." Let me tell you that simple faith gives clearer evidence than any fancy that could possess your mind. Are you still bound with the chain of your sins? Are you still shut up in the stronghold of unbelief? Have you never seen the key in the Savior's hand that opened the door to set you free? "Oh, yes," say you, "but I am afraid it was only a vision, for I am but a poor, helpless creature after all." And what else could you be? Never so safe as when you are emptied of all confidence in self.

Paul could boast of extraordinary revelations, but the Lord sent him a thorn in the flesh, lest he should be puffed up by them. Then, again, there are those who show more anxiety after gifts than after graces, and to them all the mercy they have received seems but a vision because they are not raised up above common mortals.

After this extraordinary release of Peter, you do not find any display. The apostle was but a poor, trembling believer. He would not have Mary or the damsel Rhoda talk too loudly, or express their gladness too cheerfully—he beckoned them with his hand to hold their peace. He just declared how the Lord had brought him out, and then he departed and went into another place.

Brethren, I would have you make your boast in the Lord, and speak of what He has done for your souls, but I would warn you not to vaunt your experience, or attempt to magnify yourselves as if we, any of us, had herein matter for glory. The very manner of God's delivering grace is to hide pride from our eyes, and the reality is none the less tangible, because the angel did all for us to show his strength, and then withdrew from us that we should feel our own weakness.

Once again—the suddenness of this deliverance will surprise you. "So suddenly too!" It seems like a vision. We have often known persons suddenly renewed in heart who would not believe it. They knew it was so, but still, in thinking it over, it did seem as though it could not possibly be true that they were saved. They had to rub their eyes again to see whether they were not asleep and dreaming. It was much too good to be true and have happened all on a sudden thus.

The greatness of the mercy has made them stagger. That God should just forgive them, and let them into heaven would have been marvelous, but that He should make them His children, His sons, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ—this surpassed all belief. Their fears had got such hold of them that they were ready to die, but little prepared to be saved. Their convictions had been terrible, but now the joy is so excessive, they cannot think but that it must be all presumption, all a dream.

Many and many have there been who have come to the pastor and said, "Oh I had such joys! I did believe in Christ, I know I did. I cast myself wholly on Him and I felt such a change, I became so different a person from what I had ever been before, but now I come to look back upon it, I cannot think it was true, it must have been a vision, it cannot possibly be a matter of fact."

Now, dear friends, lest you should give way to this apprehension too much, let me remind you that inasmuch as this is a great thing, it is all the better evidence that it comes from God. So great a river may well have a rapid tide. So glaring a sun may well shine with uncommon splendor. The great God does not do little acts of grace. His works are all great, sought out by all them that fear Him.

Inasmuch as you confess that you are a great sinner, and therefore this is a surprising thing, let me remind you that this is the ordinary way in which God works to give great mercies to great sinners. He does not give His favors to men who think they deserve them. He searches the heart with a glance, and He abhors the proud. But to those who are made to feel that there is no good thing in them, and rest on His grace because they have nothing else on which to depend, the mercy comes, and the prisoners are freed.

Dear friends, do you not remember that the Gospel that we preach is a very great Gospel? Is it not called in Scripture, "The great salvation"? Now, when you find your salvation to be great, do not shrink back and say, "Oh, it cannot be genuine because it is great." It would not be the genuine Gospel if it were little. If it were not a surprising wonderful thing, if it were not marvelously astonishing, it would not be the Gospel. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, says the LORD. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are my thoughts above your thoughts, and my ways above your ways."

Besides, remember, my brethren, that Jesus died in unutterable pangs on the cross. Did He die there to buy farthing mercies, to purchase little favors for little sinners? The blood of bulls and goats might achieve some little, but the blood of Him who was the only begotten of the Father cannot have been shed for trifles. Therefore the rather consider that this must have been true, because it is so great, so strange, so surpassing all your thoughts. God help you to say with the apostle Peter, "Now I know that God has sent his angel." "Thus shall you know of a surety that the Lord has sent His angel and has delivered you out of the hands of your enemies, and from all the expectation of your doubts and fears."

I will tell you how to prove the reality of it. If you should fear that your feelings have been all a dream, come with me, hand in hand and let us go to make proof of our faith at the cross. You and I, a pair of sinners, full of sin, covered with the leprosy of it from head to foot—let us go and stand at Calvary's cross. There He hangs! His hands and feet are pierced. The blood distils. Jesus! for whom do You die? "For sinners," says He. Here are two, most gracious Master, remember us when You come into Your kingdom! I think I hear Him say, "You shall be with me in Paradise," for never souls breathed that prayer in humble faith and were unheard.

Jesus, we look to Your wounds and they are clefts in the rock into which we fly like doves, or if we may not compare ourselves thereunto, we will fly as ravens and we will hide till the tempest is over. Your blood we trust to redeem us, Your merit to clothe us from head to foot, Your plea to preserve us, Your strong arm to keep us, Your love to give us life now and in eternity!

And now, before I close, let me tell you that the picture may be inverted. If there are those to whom reality seems to be a dream, what multitudes there are, on the other hand, to whom mere dreams appear to be real and true. Ah! such dreaming is the saddest thing I know, and about the hardest task it is that I ever tried—to awaken such slumberers from their delusions.

Hear me, you that seek out your own inventions, yet submit not yourselves to the righteousness of God. Do you believe in God? Ay, then the God you believe in is not the God who created heaven and earth, but the God of your own imagination. Do you profess Christ? The Christ you profess is not the Son of the Father, but the child of your own fancy. And do I hear you talk of your experience? Alas, then, it is not the witness of the Holy Spirit, but the incoherent ramblings of a delirious brain. O you poor deluded souls, who put your thoughts for God's counsels, your devices for His decrees, and your

efforts for His interposition. You “shall be as a dream of a night vision. It shall even be as when a hungry man dreams and behold, he eats, but he awakes, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreams and behold, he drinks, but he awakes and behold, he is faint and his soul has appetite.”

Christians you call yourselves today, but Christ shall say to you another day, “I never knew you.” Ah and it is true, for you never knew Him. Do you dream of peace? Without pardon it is a dream. Do you dream of heaven? Without holiness it is a dream. Do you dream of joy at God’s right hand? But you are not His people. You have never renounced the world, overcome the wicked one, confessed the faith, and followed the Master in the regeneration, which is the earnest of a blessed resurrection. Oh, sirs, consider the words, I beseech you, “As a dream when one awakes, so, O LORD, when you awake, you shall despise their image.”

Here are many, I dare say, who do not understand what I have been talking about. God give them understanding. Sinner, you must either be in Christ or perish. Remember, man, tonight there is one of two things for you—either to be shut up in the prison of hell, or else to be delivered from the prison of sin. Your destiny hangs here—salvation or damnation, life or death. Dare you die, sinner, dare you die? Dare you die with your sins about you, like millstones strapped about your neck—dare you die? No! But when the time comes for you to die, you will say, “Now I cannot live, I must not live, and I dare not die.”

Would you like to be able to die peacefully, sinner, and to rise joyfully and to reign forever hereafter? Trust Christ with your soul, and He will save you. He, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, The man of Nazareth, conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. He, God over all, blessed forever, and yet your brother, born to bear your sin. He says, “Trust Me and I will save you.” O, may His electing love move the hand of His effectual grace to incline you now to trust in Him, and that done, you are saved, and out of this house you may go a lawfully delivered captive, though perhaps you will scarcely know what it is, and know not whether it is true that is done unto you. But it is true for all that. He who believes on Him is not condemned, and he who believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God.

O that I might speak in God’s name to some of you, who perhaps, may never hear my voice again. I will meet you, as the spirit said to Brutus, on the plains I will meet you another day, each one of you, and if you live and die without trusting in that Lord, whose open wounds I have tried to set before your eyes, whose bleeding heart, streaming with His life blood, I have tried to set all warm before you—if you die without Him, on your own heads be your destruction.

You have heard the Gospel—O, that you would turn at its rebuke! Trust Christ! The feeblest touch of the hem of His garment—a look to Him and you are made whole. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so may we lift up the cross on high. O, lift it up, my brother, you who know Christ. Christian men and women, lift up that cross in your families. It is mine to lift it up here, and to cry with the Hebrew prophet, “Look, look and live!” Sin-bitten, covered with the wounds of sin. Look! It is all He asks and that He gives. “Look and live,” was written in that book, and written as on the clouds of heaven, legible only by the light they give, stand the soul-quicken words, “Believe and live.”

Leave your doings for Christ’s doings, not your tears, but Christ’s tears, not your blood, but His blood, not your groans, but His groans, not your penance, but His agonies. Come and rest in Him. Join with me in saying, from your heart—

*“My faith does lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And here confess my sin.*

*My soul looks back to see
The burden Thou didst bear
When hanging on the accursed tree,*

And hopes her guilt was there.

*Believing, we rejoice
To see the curse removed,
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,
And sing His bleeding love.”*

The Lord bless you, the God of heaven and earth bless you, from this time forth and forever. Amen.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.